

=FAVORITE BIBLE CHAPTERS=

Lesson 12

Ruth 1

INTRODUCTION: One of the most interesting books in the Bible is the book of Ruth. In the first chapter we find a tragic story of backsliding and its consequences. The story is as follows: There was a man named Elimelech and a woman named Naomi who lived in Beth-lehem-judah. There was a famine in the land, so Naomi and Elimelech took their two boys, Mahlon and Chilion, into Moab to find food. Mahlon and Chilion married two Moabitess girls named Orpah and Ruth. This family did not intend to stay in Moab. They went to sojourn, or to pass through, to get some food. However, they stayed for ten years. During this time Elimelech died; Mahlon died; and Chilion died, leaving Naomi with her two daughters-in-law, Orpah and Ruth. These three widows faced the future without their husbands. Naomi decided to return to Beth-lehem. Ruth decided to go with her. Orpah determined to stay in Moab. This is all of the story that we will discuss for this lesson from Ruth 1.

- I. THE FAMINE. Read Ruth 1:1. In the Bible a famine is usually punishment for sin. No doubt the people of God had sinned and were being punished for their iniquities.
- II. BETH-LEHEM. This word means “house of bread.” This is very interesting. The people thought they were going to Moab for bread, when the truth is, they lived in the house of bread. It is tragic, but often too true, that Christians do not realize the joy of serving God. The world always looks better. We leave the house of bread to try to find bread in a place where there is no bread (the world).
- III. THE TRIP TO MOAB. In the Bible, Moab is a type of sin. The Moabites were descendants of Lot and his daughter when they committed their awful sin in the little city of Zoar after Sodom and Gomorrah had been destroyed by fire. Lot was guilty of the sin of incest with his daughter. From that unholy union came Moab. From Moab came the Moabites. Hence, the Moabites in the Bible symbolize the world. When God’s people left the land of promise to go to the land of Moab, it was always considered backsliding.
- IV. THE DURATION. Notice the word “sojourn” in Ruth 1:1. This word means “to pass through.” They did not intend to stay in Moab. They intended to go just for a while. This is always the case. People never intend to go into sin for a long time; they just want to try it once. Before they know it, Satan has ensnared them, and they are living in Moab. The truth is, they stayed ten years. This was quite a long “sojourn,” was it not! How tragic, yet how true, is the fact that we intend just to taste sin, but soon we become addicted. This is why it is so important that we do not even touch the unclean thing.
- V. THE COMPANIONS. Notice the last words in Ruth 1:1, “...he, and his wife, and his two sons.” He did not go to Moab alone; he took his family with him. No one ever backslides alone. When we leave God, we influence others and take others with us. A father backsliding can cause the children to backslide. Some who backslide carry friends with them; some carry loved ones. How sad is the influence of sin!
- VI. THE NAME “ELIMELECH.” “Elimelech” means “my God is king.” Here is something hypocritical. God was not his king! Oh, yes, he was no doubt saved, but he had left the will of God for his life. Here is a backslider staying in Moab saying that God was his king. What a sin it is to be a hypocrite!
- VII. THE NAME “NAOMI.” “Naomi” means “pleasant.” However, when she returned to Beth-lehem after having been backslidden for ten years, she asked them to change her name to “Mara.” See Ruth 1:20. “Mara” means “bitter.” This is what sin does. When one backslides, he goes out pleasant and comes back bitter. There’s something else about Naomi. She could not be recognized when she went back to Beth-lehem. In Ruth 1:19 the folks back home asked the question, “Is this Naomi?” Sin always makes its mark and takes its toll. Naomi was not the same as she had once been.
- VIII. THE NAME “MAHLON.” Read Ruth 1:2. “Mahlon” means “sick.” No doubt he was a sick child. Here we find the punishment of God upon the backsliding of Naomi. God does bring sickness, disease and heartache to those who backslide. He chastens His own.

- IX. THE NAME "CHILION." "Chilion" means "pining, melancholy, sad." Here is the kind of son that backsliding brings.
- X. ELIMELECH'S DEATH. Notice Ruth 1:3. God punished Elimelech for backsliding by taking his life. Naomi was also punished. She is now a widow and is left with two sons to raise. Oh, the horrible consequences of sin and backsliding!
- XI. MAHLON AND CHILION'S MARRIAGES. Notice in Ruth 1:4 that they married Moabite girls, Orpah and Ruth. What else could Naomi and Elimelech expect? They had taken their sons into Moabite country, so their sons married heathen women. (Teacher: Stress the importance of God's people staying in the will of God. When a man is transferred from one city to another, if it is not the will of God, not only will he cause himself to be out of the perfect will of God, but he will no doubt cause his children to marry people outside the will of God. Here is one of the saddest things about parents leaving God's will for their lives.)
- XII. THE DEATH OF MAHLON AND CHILION. Read Ruth 1:5. Ah, it just keeps getting worse and worse, doesn't it? Backsliding leads to misery. Naomi becomes bitter, sin shows in her face, Elimelech dies, the boys marry heathen girls, and now her boys die. It seems that there is no end of punishment for sin when one leaves the will of God. May we be warned of the consequences of leaving God's will and backsliding.

CONCLUSION: Teacher, so many things should be stressed in this lesson. Study each point carefully. Teachers of adults should warn heavily about moves, transfers, changes of jobs, etc. Teachers of children should remind their pupils of the awful penalties of sin. All should be reminded of the importance of staying in the center of God's will, regardless of how green the other pastures look.